

## SCFG: Four locomotives leased from a Missouri-based firm

● GILLES GAGNÉ

NEW RICHMOND – The Société du chemin de fer de la Gaspésie (SCFG) recently reached a five-year agreement with a firm based in Missouri, United States, for the lease of four locomotives that will be used at the beginning of the summer on freight trains between New Richmond and Matapédia.

The first two locomotives arrived on the afternoon of May 9 in New Richmond as part of that day's freight train. Their engines were not running. They were stationed shortly after outside the Rail GD shop where their final livery will be added.

Their model is GP38-3, a type of locomotive built from 1963 onwards by General Motors. Numbered HLCX 1069 and HLCX 1054, both locomotives belong to Helm Leasing, a major supplier of locomotives for railway companies that need extra power.

The two other locomotives leased by the (SCFG) will be brought in later this spring. The four locomotives were



Credit: G. Gagné

*The first two locomotives leased by the SCFG were sent to the Rail GD shop in New Richmond for the laying of the transporter's livery.*

built by what was then called the Electro-Motive Division of General Motors in La Grange, Illinois.

“We were not in a position to buy them now and there is nothing on the market to buy, or very little. We would have

had to invest a big amount of money and it would not have been wise to do it now, as we will be in transition for a while,” explains Luc Lévesque, director general of the (SCFG).

The transition he is refer-

ring to comes from the fact that, at the end of the current year, the SCFG will start serving the Port Daniel cement plant, which is supposed to add some traffic to the existing one, and 50 miles of functional trackage, the distance between New Richmond and Port Daniel's cement plant.

“The locomotives we leased were built in 1967-1968 but they were completely rebuilt in 2013. In fact, they were originally GP40s with 1,000 horsepower (hp) more than their current 2,000 hp but those 1,000 hp were excess power if you don't use the locomotives on a fast line. Our freight trains are not fast trains,” explains Mr. Lévesque.

He expects the first two leased locomotives to integrate the service between New Richmond and Matapédia at the end of June.

“We need some time to train our employees on these locomotives, so that they get familiar with their systems, the way they function and how to start them,” he specifies.

Luc Lévesque is working on several files that could increase traffic considerably between Matapédia and Port Daniel, as well as over intermediate points like New Carlisle.

“That's why we will keep the six locomotives we currently own. If everything pans out, we will need all that power,” he concludes.

The current roster of the SCFG consists of six RS18 locomotives developing 1,800 hp. They were built in 1956-1957 by the Montreal Locomotive Works (MLW) shop. They were first ordered by Canadian Pacific and sold in the 1990s to a few short lines.

The New Richmond to Gaspé portion of the region's railway network is undergoing major upgrading work. The section between Port Daniel and Gaspé will require investments totalling \$517 million.

Once completed, the whole line between Matapédia and Gaspé will have necessitated works amounting to \$871.8 million. That line has belonged to Transports Québec since the spring of 2015.